

ROUND THE CHURCHES

126: Letterbreen Methodist Church

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Letterbreen is a small village in County Fermanagh, five miles south-west of Enniskillen on the main route to Sligo in the foothills of the Belmore Mountain.

Although there was a Methodist presence in the area since the days of John Wesley, the first substantial record of a Methodist class in Letterbreen itself comes from 1868 when seven members are recorded as part of the Drumlaghy division of the Enniskillen Circuit.

By 1872 regular cottage meetings were being held, and then in 1879 Letterbreen Schoolhouse was rented from Captain Archdale for weekly Sunday services.

By then the need was felt for a building of their own, and in 1884 a site was secured and building commenced with stone quarried from Glenfarn and carted to

the site by Letterbreen members. The new chapel was opened on 26 April 1885 at a cost of £800. It was capable of seating 225 worshippers. By that stage membership associated with the new building had risen to 50 and services were being held twice a Sunday.

Five years after the chapel was opened, a Sunday School was started and with it a Band of Hope temperance society. Work among young people was further strengthened in 1899 when a Christian Endeavour Society was formed.

Over the years various modifications to the chapel were undertaken. A ceiling had to be modified and several renovations were made but then on Saturday 27 January 1945, on a frosty winter night, the heating boiler exploded and destroyed the preaching-

house that had stood for over 60 years.

As the Methodists were now without a building, the Church of Ireland rector immediately offered them the use of the parochial hall as a temporary measure until a Nissan hut was erected on the site of the chapel.

Post-war strictures on building prevented an immediate start to the work of reinstating the church, and it wasn't until 1950 that clearance was given to proceed. Work was begun in 1951, and on 22 March 1952 the new church was opened by Miss Evangeline Lauder of Belfast at a cost of £7,000.

In 1960 the Nissan hut was replaced by a new church hall. During the intervening years, work at Letterbreen has continued faithfully with regular Sunday services, Sunday School, Bible study/prayer meetings and MWI. In addition a Girls' Brigade, Bowling Club and Youth Club continue to meet the needs of the congregation and community.

One thing that has not changed is that after almost 125 years, the work and witness at Letterbreen still remain active and its members have a vision for the future of the work in Letterbreen and the wider circuit.